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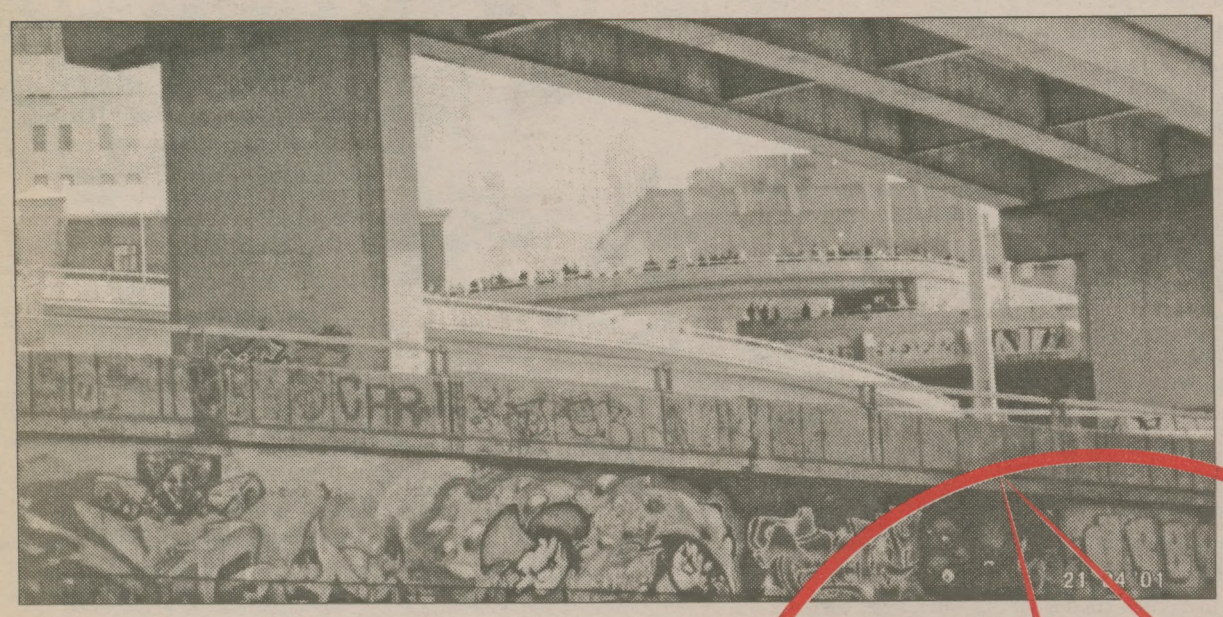
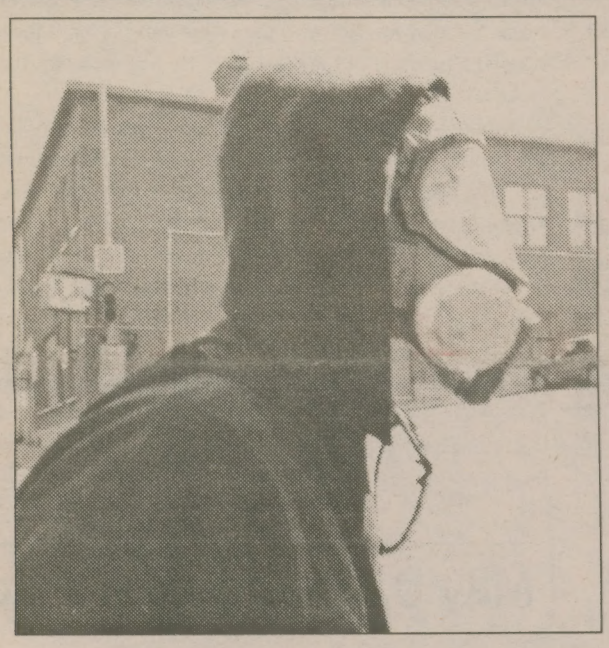
FTAA PROTESTS

QUÉBEC CITY APRIL 20-22, 2001





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UVic student arrested at FTAA protest

Morgan Stewart's name added to casualty list in war against globalization

by Kevin Groves

Former UVic Students' Society chair, Morgan Stewart, was arrested during a peaceful protest march in Quebec City, last month. He now faces charges of uttering death threats to a police officer and damaging a police van, which Stewart and various witnesses say is untrue.

"I was kidnapped," says Stewart. "It certainly looks like the police forces had a quota of people to pick up to justify their expense at the Summit."

He pleaded not-guilty and called the charges ludicrous. Stewart was part of a 70,000 strong march against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and was seven blocks from the notorious three-metre high perimeter fence, when he was arrested. The march was supposed to be a "green zone," an area designated by protesters for those not wanting to risk arrest.

Stewart was marching and chanting through a bullhorn when he was suddenly surrounded, and dragged by six police officers into an unmarked van, while stunned friends and fellow marchers demanded an explanation. Once in the van, Stewart's attempts to reason with police met with negative response.

> I was kidnapped. It certainly looks like the police forces had a quota of people to pick up to justify their expense at the Summit.
>
> *Morgan Stewart*

"I took off my helmet as a gesture of conciliation and an officer picked it up and punched me in the face with it," he said.

He was moved to the Orsonville detention centre, six miles out of Quebec City, and released several days later. During his stay at the jail, Stewart was held without food for nearly 24 hours, and without water for 12.

Quebec City police refused to comment directly on Stewart's arrest, and subsequent treatment in jail. They later released a statement on the security force's official website stating, "the police forces remained professional throughout the Summit by adopting a measured approach."

Stewart said he was baffled by his seemingly random arrest and charges, though he offered some potential explanations. He wondered if his use of a bullhorn during the march, or his criticisms of police in earlier media interviews could have singled him out as a potential radical.

"It was planned insanity, really," he said. "The police forces were forcibly trying to destroy our ability to organize, and they certainly succeeded."

Svend Robinson, New Democrat MP who has worked with Stewart in the past, said he hopes the charges are dropped.

"If we look at the history of these types of demonstrations in Canada, what will usually happen is the Crown will initially throw the book at protesters, and then quietly drop the charges later," he said. "The same pattern should hold true for Morgan."

Robinson, who was injured in the leg by a rubber bullet in a similar demonstration on the same day as Stewart's arrest, feels that the incident is yet another example of the "abuse of power" conducted by the police at the summit.

"I feel that police conduct at the summit was illegal, and an assault on democratic protest. It's ironic that while the leaders were inside the enclosed area talking about democracy, the police were attacking democracy outside."

Recent Carleton University graduate, Greg Younger-Lewis, witnessed Stewart's arrest, and wondered whether his dark clothes might have identified him as a member of an anarchist group, like the Black Bloc. Stewart was dressed in a blue sweatshirt, ski goggles, and a motorcycle helmet, as a means of protection from tear gas and rubber bullets.

"Both Saturday night and again on Sunday I saw the same pattern unfold where white or beige minivans would stop, and haul off one particular person," said Younger-Lewis. "Each abduction involved someone who either had a gas mask or was dressed in black. Morgan was not who they were looking for, if they indeed wanted a member of the Black Bloc. He was guilty for the way he looked."

Younger-Lewis also voiced his disgust over the unwillingness of the parade marshals to help Stewart as he was being arrested.

"That was the part that turned my stomach more than anything. They stepped in and pulled off those who were trying to help Morgan," he said. "They aided the police, no questions asked, under the assumption that he was a troublemaker, and perhaps for the sake of their precious reputation."

Tens of thousands of protesters were in Quebec City on April 20-22 to demonstrate against the FTAA agreement, which many people feel is a threat to democracy, and gives too much power to big-business while jeopardizing the environment and social programs.

photo by Jeremy Nelson

Morgan Stewart experiences the kinder, gentler tactics of the Quebec Police.

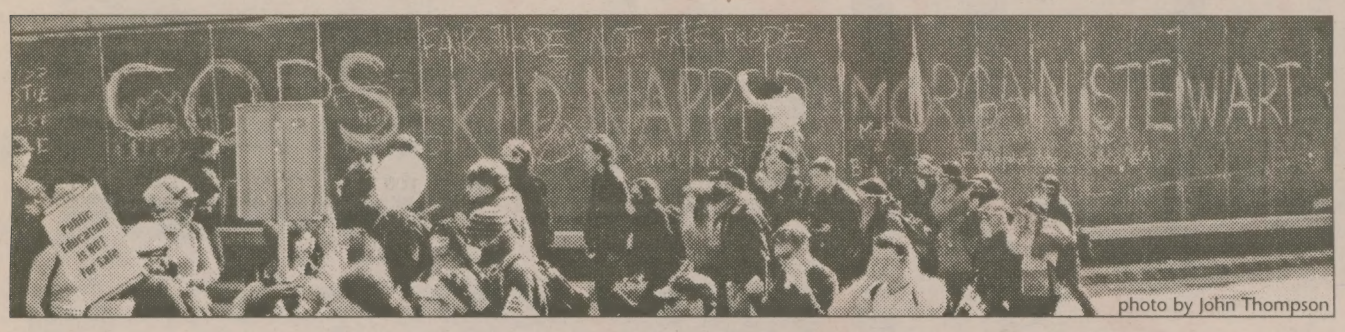

photo by John Thompson

FTAA at centre of May Day discussion

by Jason Gondziola

In keeping with a six-year Victoria tradition, people filled the BCGEU Hall to take part in May Day festivities. At the top of the evening's list were discussions about the FTAA protests in Quebec city.

"May Day is about making sure people know about their past," said Kevin Neish, one of the organizers of the event. "If you don't know about the past, you're doomed to repeat it."

Festivities were kicked off by Stacy Chappel, Executive Director of the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group (VIPIRG), who performed a farce rendition of the Teddy Bear's Picnic. Old labour songs were performed by Brian Skinner and Art Farquharson.

> May Day is about making sure people know about their past. If you don't know about the past, you're doomed to repeat it.
>
> *Kevin Neish*

Experiences were shared with the audience through oral presentations and videos from Quebec City. UVic doctoral student Mike Burnett and VIPIRG's Krisztina Kun both showed movies from the walled city, shedding light on much that was omitted by the mainstream media.

"A lot of people who stayed here got eyewitness and personal accounts that they would never have seen on the mainstream news," said Mary Conquest, UVic student and Quebec activist. "It's important for those who stayed here to hear an accurate depiction of what it was like."

Conquest delivered a riveting speech about what being a hero is all about.

"It's about the support that comes from home," she said. "It's about the continued efforts of activists who have been taking pictures at the front, organizing rallies at home, supporting those of us who got shaken up, culture jamming, making documentaries, and writing letters."

Morgan Stewart also took to the stage to deliver a 45-minute speech, touching on a number of issues.

"The key point was in understanding of the reality of Quebec," said Stewart. "How violent it was, how under attack we were, how much what we were doing was not provoking them in any way, how much of a war zone it was, and how all we have to do is talk to each other."

Stewart, who is awaiting trial for charges brought against him in Quebec City, said the motives behind police actions were very apparent.

"Their focus was clearly on the people who were able to tell the story about what was going on," he said.

Neish agrees, recalling similar incidents throughout the history of labour rights.

"We've been here before. Basically, we're going down the same path again here," said Neish. "Bullshit charges, throw him in jail, get the leadership off the streets. Back then, they killed 'em."

He explained that the tactic has always been for police to neutralize the leadership in any way legally possible. "Get them off the streets on any kind of a charge. That's what they did with Jaggi and Morgan," he said, referring to the arrests of Jaggi Singh and Morgan Stewart in Quebec City.

Neish commented about the need for new tactics in the ongoing struggle for democracy. "You can't fight the police," he said. "And now even peacefully sitting on the ground isn't working because they attack you and the media makes you look like the bad guys."

However, all is not lost for the "the movement with no name."

Activists are looking for more grassroots solutions and direct forms of education, ranging from independently published media to simply talking with people.

"If people are able to talk to each other about what's going on, that will make the biggest difference," said Stewart.

Conquest agreed, adding that conversing about the issues is key to accomplishing anything.

"Unless there is a useful discussion about the consequences of free trade and the nature of democracy, these demonstrations will mean nothing," said Conquest.

By the evening's end, $150 was raised for local artist and rubber bullet survivor Richard Brooks, and another $350 for the Quebec Legal Defense Fund to help pay the legal costs of incarcerated activists.

May Day around the world

compiled by Jason Gondziola

England
In London, tens of thousands took to the streets in massive protests. Police made a strong showing, determined to curb the violence that turned last year's demonstrations into a full-fledged riot. Protesters threw stones at the prime minister's residence and tore down a McDonald's sign. Many who participated in the rallies saw the police presence as excessive, stating that they had no plans of violent confrontation.

Germany
In Berlin, roughly 500 protesters set small fires and threw rocks and bottles at the police, prompting them to turn a water canon on the crowd.

Australia
Sydney police officers on horseback duelled it out with hundreds of anti-globalization protesters. Reports indicate up to 28 arrests were made, and two officers were hospitalized.
In Brisbane, protesters made an unsuccessful siege-attempt at the stock market.

Mexico
Tens of thousands turned out to protest in Mexico City, opposing President Fox's inclusion of food and medicine as taxable items under the Value Added Tax (VAT).

Cuba
As usual, the largest May Day demonstration took place in Havana. Millions took to the streets in massive rallies, including a parade of puppets through Revolution Square, mocking the critics of Cuba's communist system.

Canada
Most Canadian celebrations were carried out without incident; however, this was not the case in Vancouver. Reports from Vancouver speak of police officers using their bicycles as weapons, swinging them at people in a crowd in an attempt to clear the crowd. There is one report of injuries from a police motorcycle that was used to push through a crowd of seated protesters. Also reported was a liberal usage of pepper spray on a small group of protesters who were postering the bus shelters along the parade route.

B.C. parties debate the future of post-secondary education

by Kevin Groves

Student groups are worried about changes to post-secondary education that could arise with the provincial election, and are encouraging students to get out and vote.

"The Liberals have been speaking in code about tuition fees during this election," said Anita Zaenker, BC Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS). "By refusing to answer student questions about their plans, we fear they are laying the groundwork for tuition fee hikes."

The CFS recently wrote an open letter to the Liberal leader Gordon Campbell, asking him to clarify his position on education. The student lobby group fears that the Liberal Party, a runaway favourite to win the election, will lift the long-standing tuition freeze in the province.

Ida Chong, BC Liberal candidate for Oak Bay/Gordon Head riding, which includes the University of Victoria campus, did not return the Martlet's numerous calls by press time.

According to the BC Liberals website, Campbell would support the five per cent tuition fee freeze and fully fund it in the current fiscal year to offset costs to post-secondary institutes. But the Liberals have not outlined a specific plan for post-secondary education, including commitments to core funding, tuition fee levels and student aid.

"When Mr. Campbell slips onto a campus, why won't he talk about funding for institutions, tuition fees and student grants?" said Zaenker. "His evasiveness doesn't bode well for BC colleges and universities, students and their families."

Liberal candidates have refused to attend all candidate forums at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver Community College, Northwest Community College, and UVic, which would have inevitably focussed on policy issues such as tuition and student loans.

Charley Beresford, NDP candidate for Oak Bay/Gordon Head, said that her party is absolutely committed to post-secondary education as a whole.

"In the past 20 years, the NDP has opened the only three new universities in Canada," she said.

Beresford added that her party plans to make further reductions in tuition over the next four years, should it be in a position to do so.

In February of 2001, the NDP announced a fully funded 5% reduction in tuition fees for 2001-2002, with additional core funding to institutions.

Current BC Premier Ujjal Dosanjh promised recently that the NDP would work toward providing 5000 more new spaces for students in classrooms, as well as new funding for textbooks, learning resources and technology.

The Green Party would like to fully fund post-secondary education for all students with public money.

"We're committed to providing free post secondary education," said Christin Geall, Green Party Candidate for Oak Bay/Gordon Head. "If the Green Party were elected, we'd like to remove tuition within a year, and make sure that it is accessible to all members of society, including adults and those who have been disenfranchised in the past."

Geall also said that her party would increase the base level of funding for high opportunity occupations such as teachers, health care professionals, sustainable technologies and industry-based job training. The Greens are also for increasing funding to the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Geall added that her party would increase funding for needs-based grants and scholarships, and reinstitute the system of providing 50% of every student loan as a grant.

"If tuition were removed, we'd be looking at loans to deal just with the cost of living, which would minimize loan debt," she said.

Only 18% of British Columbians age 18-25 voted in the 1996 provincial election.

EDITORIAL

From Quebec to B.C.

What is the connection between the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) protests and the B.C. provincial election? The first impulse may be to say that there is no connection, that these two events are unrelated. Yet hundreds of activists from British Columbia journeyed across the country to join the FTAA protests. Here in Victoria, thousands of people participated in the March for Global Justice on April 21st to show solidarity for the action in Quebec. One would only assume from listening to conversations and speeches, and admiring the bold and blatant statements on placards and banners that not many of the B.C. protesters at either event will vote Liberal in the provincial election.

The polls predict that from May 2001, British Columbia will have a Liberal majority government. The remainder of the vote will be divided between the two major left parties: the New Democrats and the Green Party, with the Greens ahead in the polls two days before the election.

It only takes a quick glance at the language used on any of these party's websites to get a sense of the values behind the platforms. The Liberal platform promises free enterprise, private sector investment, and fiscal responsibility. The Greens want to address, among other things, social inequities and poverty as systemic, not individual, problems. The New Democrats use words like quality of life and social justice.

The FTAA prioritizes a corporate agenda over the needs and rights of ordinary citizens who make up the majority of the population of the 34 countries involved in this proposed trade agreement. Under the FTAA, control of electricity, water, and education, to name a few, are turned over to profit-motivated corporations. Private sector investment and free enterprise are the rule and under such rule addressing social justice, quality of life, and systemic inequities requires a great deal of energy and sustained resistance.

People risked their health and safety in Quebec, and showed solidarity in other parts of the country against the kind of values that drive the B.C. Liberals and more broadly the FTAA. Concerned B.C. citizens fought and continue to fight for social justice, to improve the quality of life, to protect the environment, and to make connections between all of these.

There is a strong connection between the FTAA and the B.C. election. Both inspire resistance, provoke dialogue and encourage each of us to continually examine our priorities.

STUDENT VOICE

Is education an essential service?

by Tara Ehrcke

The BC Liberals finally unveiled their platform and to no one's surprise included a promise to make education an essential service. Such legislation would make it illegal for any workers in educational institutions to strike. The Liberals have already introduced such legislation four times as a private members bill. They are featuring this prominently on their television and print advertising.

Anyone who has followed the Liberal dogma on labour issues in the past knows that this is simply an attack on labour rights and has absolutely nothing to do with the quality of education. It will prevent educators, support workers, maintenance workers and others intimately involved in our educational institutions from having a fair say in how these institutions are run. This excludes the people most qualified to make these decisions – the people on the ground running these institutions on a day to day basis. Moreover, essential services legislation is typically accompanied by reduced powers for elected school boards and parent groups, as has been the case in Ontario.

The Liberals claim that essential services legislation would reduce the number of school days lost to labour disputes. There is simply no evidence for this. As the BC Teacher's Federation points out, such legislation is likely to prolong labour disputes, as there is little pressure on the government to reach an agreement. It increases the levels of bureaucracy involved in reaching collective agreements. It diverts attention from the issues in the dispute. Finally, it is unnecessary – there is no imminent physical harm to any human beings as a result of a school strike.

Since 1992, K-12 students have lost .81 days per student, or 27 minutes per student per year. The University of Victoria has seen only one strike in its 35-year history. In exchange, job action by school workers has produced immeasurable benefits for students. Unions in educational settings have fought for class size limits, adequate preparation time for teachers, health and safety protection for everyone on school property, minimum staffing levels, increased funding for education, limits on corporate involvement in publicly funded schools and universities, and fair wages for education workers. Every one of these things improves the quality of education for students. None of them could be won without the right to strike.

The Liberal's proposal must also be seen in a broader political perspective. It is the first of what may be many assaults on both worker's rights and quality education. Both the Alberta and Ontario Tories have flirted with similar ideas within a broader agenda that has included voucher systems that favour schools in wealthy neighborhoods, increased testing, cuts to overall funding, reductions in preparation time for teachers, massive tuition increases at the post-secondary level, allowing private institutions to grant degrees, lengthening the work week to 60 hours, and making it harder to organize a union and negotiate a first contract.

Consider the words of David Chudnovsky, president of the British Columbia Teacher's Federation:

"Is education essential? You bet it's essential, Mr. Campbell, but not in the way you mean. It's essential that students have smaller classes. It's essential that services for students with special needs and for ESL students be improved. It's essential that Aboriginal students be given a better chance at success. And it's essential that teachers have the right to full and free collective bargaining."

Legislation would cover all educational institutions. At this university we might add to that list: it is essential that students can graduate in four years because their required courses ARE available. It's essential that we reduce waiting lists. It's essential that we work to improve the quality of education, not waste money attacking those people who make our educational institutions work.

LETTERS

Apology to Mr. Bruce Partridge
Past President of the University of Victoria (1969-72)

In the fall of 1998, the Martlet Publishing Society published a book called Newspaper R(evolution): The Martlet 50 Years, a 50th anniversary reminiscence of the history of this newspaper. In that book, the Society caused to be re-published stories that were originally published in 1971 during Mr. Bruce Partridge's tenure as President of the University of Victoria.

In publishing the said book, the Society did not intend to suggest that Mr. Partridge in any way misrepresented his academic credentials to the University of Victoria or to any other party. Nor does the Society suggest that Mr. Partridge's American law degrees, earned in 1950 and 1952 through the Blackstone College of Law, were not lawfully obtained. The selection committee, which unanimously recommended Mr. Partridge's appointment as president, and the University Board of Governors, which appointed him, were fully aware of Mr. Partridge's academic credentials. It is our understanding that Mr. Partridge was considered an exceptional administrator. Mr. Partridge showed restraint in not taking legal action in connection with the 1971 stories placing the interests of the University of Victoria ahead of his own.

After he left the University of Victoria, Mr. Partridge pursued a L.L.B. degree from the University of British Columbia and graduated second in his class, having completed his legal studies in two and one half instead of the usual three years. He then went on to successful careers both in legal and in academic circles and is the author of a textbook on management in Canada.

The Martlet Publishing Society,
D. Climenhaga, J. Trueman, M. Vallis

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The personal cost of activism

Victoria artist encounters tear gas and a rubber bullet in Québec

by Jason Gondziola

A few weeks ago I walked up to the bar at Felicita's and asked to see Richard Brooks. The server waltzed me through the kitchen, down secret corridors, and into Vertigo. Hunched over in a chair, Richard was applying finishing touches to his latest masterpiece: a chalk beer advertisement. I hadn't seen him since he was released from the hospital nine days ago.

Introductions were brief, he was still busy. We could talk afterward.

Half an hour later, he emerged from the nightclub into the daylit halls of the SUB. Chalk virtuoso, Quebec survivor, underpaid artist. I first met him two weeks before we all hopped into a rental van and drove to Quebec City.

Upon returning from Quebec City, many activists had a hard time adjusting to normal life. The psychological effects of being in a virtual war zone wore on the mind, but in a sense these survivors had it lucky. Aside from a persistent cough, most of us got out of Quebec without serious physical damage. Richard was an exception.

On April 21, a few hours after witnessing the abduction of Morgan Stewart by police officers, Richard set up his materials on the sidewalk outside the Center for Media Alternatives Quebec (CMAQ). He planned to continue on a chalk image he'd begun earlier that day.

"I was quite comfortable there, as this was the kind of setting I was used to doing at Cook Street," he said,"I was quite happy that this form of propaganda was a success. I had a woman who did a tape interview for this radio show in California."

The image was of a poorly clothed Asian boy with no shoes holding up a pair of brand-new Nike running shoes, presenting them to a symbolic boss. "A benign but sinister old man in a crisp blue business suit, reaching outward to take the shoes from the boy and half smiling with his blue lips," he said.

photo by John Thompson

Richard was totally engrossed in creating the image, and was startled when someone yelled "bomb!" A cluster bomb of teargas canisters went off and a cloud of vapors two or three stories tall rose about a block away from Richard.

"It came as a complete surprise. I'm sure it came as a complete surprise to everyone," said Richard. "The people down there, they were resting, talking to others, and regrouping. Smoking and chatting and acting as normal as could be, given the circumstance that there was a police action in effect."

The crowd panicked and began to run, nearly trampling Richard and his drawing materials. "I didn't want to abandon all my materials and have them get crushed," he said. "I tried to pick them up and then I glanced up from what I was doing because I heard hissing, like serpents, and there were at least two canisters in close proximity to me - practically sitting on top of the drawing itself."

Richard inhaled a large quantity of the gas as he tried to seek refuge in the CMAQ building. The door was barred. People were being refused entry. "It's not that they didn't have compassion for the people who were still out there," he said. "They couldn't let any more people in, and they couldn't open the door because the gas was seeping in."

Overcome by the gas, he staggered. He fell to the ground and was assisted by one of the volunteer medics. "I almost want to say that he looked like someone from Mad Max," Richard said, smiling shyly. "He was covered with gas and goggles. If ever there was a post-apocalyptic figure, it was him."

After treatment, Richard and the medic made a circle around the block to get away from the gas, soon returning to see if more people needed help. "So me and the medic, we head back to the area of the initial gas attack, and I see a semicircle of people bunched up and shouting towards the top of the stairs, at what I soon discovered was a line of riot police," he said. "They were shoulder to shoulder, facemasks down, shields up, and weapons poised."

Something came over Richard as he surveyed the scene before him. "It was at that time that a strange mood of irrational defiance came over me," he said. "I bent down and I picked up a placard stick left there in the wake of the stampede. I walked up the steps slowly, one by one, until I was up on the second landing."

The police did not respond, but stood there silently, awaiting his next move. "I said something like 'take this you corporate fuckers' and I hurled the stick at them like a javelin," he said.

The stick bounced off and over one of the shields, landing to the right of the lineup. "In the following second a shot rang out, and my brain was numb with pain," he said. "It was almost simultaneous, since they were at a fairly close range, approximately 14 or 15 feet. The force of the impact spun me around against the wall of the CMAQ building."

"I felt that all my breath was sucked up inside me and I couldn't get any air," he said. "It felt like I had been branded with a cattle iron."

Richard stumbled down the stairs and fell to his knees. A local woman, Louise Bouchard, took Richard's arm around her shoulder and helped him to her place, where he would be safe. Her friend, a paramedic, examined Richard for broken ribs, checked for pupil dilation, and measured his pulse. Once Richard was able to walk, he decided that he should return to CMAQ.

"I said that I had to get outside to find my friends. I headed in the direction of CMAQ," he said. By this time, the police activity had calmed down, so he could get into the CMAQ building. "The moment they realized that I had been hit with one of those rubber bullets, they laid me down next to a wall where they were checking my condition and trying to help me."

Richard spent two hours in the CMAQ building, eating bread and cheese, drinking water. "I hadn't eaten all day," he said.

"They had to help me to the bathroom and that was when I discovered blood in my urine. I got out of the washroom and I sat down and began to lose consciousness."

Meanwhile, the police action outside the building was beginning to escalate again.

"Some people thought that they were going to overtake the media center," he said. "I can remember them trying to rush a small child out- a baby that had been the victim of a gas attack. The people looking after me were trying to get an ambulance there. They said that if my friends did not arrive soon that I would have to go off to the hospital by ambulance."

Stefan Schmidt, one of Richard's friends, called me on the cell. He said we had to get down to the media center because Richard had been hit with a rubber bullet. Scott Hart and I got into the rental van and gunned it down Henri Bourassa, into the helicopter-filled, gas-laden Quebec City-centre.

As Scott and I tore through the small sidestreets of Quebec, Stefan directed us on the phone how to avoid the police. Fellow protesters tried to dissuade us from our path as we neared the CMAQ. They waved us in the opposite direction as the travel-seasoned rental van crept up the street.

"Our friend is inside!" Scott yelled, jumping out of the van. "He needs to get to a hospital!"

Slowly, the crowd opened enough so I could pull in front of the doorway. I looked up the outdoor staircase to see a small battalion of police in riot gear. The smell and burn of teargas grew.

The van door slid open and my friends helped Richard into the van. The volunteer medics handed me directions to the hospital advising us to leave quickly.

With everyone in the van, I barreled down the street, narrowly missing the protesters who lined the curbs. A bearded man stood in front of the headlights ahead of us, waving his hands and pleading with us to slow down. We eased the van around the corner and sped up Rue Charest Est, eventually finding our way to the hospital.

photo by John Thompson

"John and Stef took me inside," Richard said. "I was fetched a wheelchair immediately and admitted for examination quite quickly. The doctor on shift also checked my lungs and checked for broken ribs. I seemed to be fainting again, at which point he said 'you are not going anywhere my friend. Welcome to Quebec!'"

Richard was put in bed, with his feet elevated to keep the blood in his head. They hooked him up to some monitoring equipment and gave him morphine. A urine test revealed more blood, prompting concerns that there was damage to his kidneys.

Richard was kept in the hospital overnight for observation, and then given a full meal and released the next afternoon. We picked him up and soon left town, to start the 60 hour return voyage. We arrived on Wednesday, April 25.

"Thursday, I was down in Cook Street Village doing chalk art on the sidewalk," Richard said. Nearby, an elderly woman had fallen to the ground, and her companions were unable to help her to her feet. "So I went over and lifted her up, but apparently I put quite a bit of strain on my abdomen - enough to reopen the wound. About ten or fifteen minutes later, I was in a great deal of pain and again started to lose consciousness."

Richard returned home and upon seeing his condition his landlady called an ambulance. He was rushed to the Royal Jubilee Hospital and admitted to intensive care. They ran a tube down through his nose and into his stomach, keeping him on a steady vacuum for two days to keep his stomach empty should they have to operate. He was given an intravenous drip and morphine, again.

"I was under bed rest orders to stay confined to the bed and not walk around at all," Richard said. "Basically, to remain immobile until the surgeon in charge, the specialist, felt that there was no additional bleeding inside."

Richard remained in the hospital for six days in total, having the tube removed from his stomach at the end of his second day. By his fourth day, he was on a regular diet. On day six, he was discharged.

Richard was counting on some odd jobs over the summer: gardening or other manual labour. This has become an impossibility for the time being. He is still at risk of reopening his wounds, which would mean more hospital stays, more tubes and more lost time.

Now, unable to perform the jobs he had hoped to depend on for his summer income, Richard is looking for commissions for his artwork. A May Day event held at the BCGEU raised $150 to help cover his lost income, which helps, but is not enough.

All of this because the police, who were charged with the duty of serving and protecting the interests of the people, saw it fit to respond to a thrown stick with a rubber bullet.

And he never did get to finish his drawing.

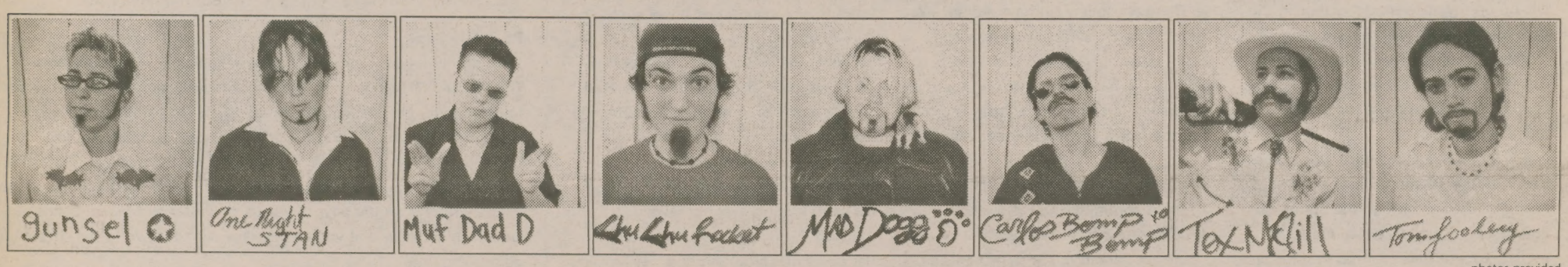
photo by Jason Gondziola

Drag kings come out of the shadows in Victoria

by Lorna Mace

Backstreet's back. Although not in the usual way, shape or form. I got the privilege of chatting with four of the eight members of Five O'clock Shadow, a group of flamboyant and energetic drag kings fighting their way to the top. Or at least for now, to Vancouver. Along with their informal debut at the G-Spot, these girls have performed from the Drip Café, to the Fernwood Community Centre – spreading their message and, of course, those boy-band classic hits. After viewing a performance, it's evident that Wyndi, Kaila, Jolene, Holly, Stacy, Karrie, Wendi and Ali have got the moves, the stubble, and the necessary bulges to make them stars. So, if you missed seeing the New Kids on the Block live, or if you weren't yet around to check out Elton John in his plaid and glitter years, watch for an upcoming Five O'clock Shadow show.

M: So, for starters, how would you define what you do?
Jolene: Well, this is our mission statement that outlines our goal as a group: "We will provide a variety of performances with humour, farce, and flamboyant flair... and all shows are inclusive and affordable."
Holly: There's a lot of stuff in there about not fighting with each other. Oh, and to be respectful of all hair.
Wyndi: Mullets and all.
M: How was Five O'clock Shadow born? And, of course, how did you get the name?
Wyndi: Five O'clock Shadow was kind of co-founded between Stacy and I, when we decided that we wanted to put on a show at the G-Spot. We got together a few friends who liked to perform, and we did a couple of shows with whoever could participate. Then, when we were getting ready to do a show for a friend of ours who runs the Drip Café, we decided to make it more of a group – advertise, and do it on a regular basis. We were looking for a name that reflected masculinity, so we came up with Five O'clock Shadow. At that time, there were five members, so it was quite corny and... apt.
M: How does Victoria respond to your shows?
Kaila: They respond well. There are very few things to do that are queer-focused... and FUN. Not a lot of people go to the bar scene, so this is a night of entertainment for them.
Wyndi: After being in a really small town for a long time, the idea of having an active community, having fun events to go out to, and being a part of making that space, is a really amazing thing.
M: What is the statement that you, as a group, wish to make?
Kaila: I think everyone in the group has their ideas. Some do it strictly for the fun of it, and for some, it's a political thing.
Holly: And for some, it was just a life-long dream to be a Backstreet Boy.
Wyndi: We just try to make the space as inclusive as possible. We've had people ask us if they could put their art up, so we try to make it a much more rounded space, rather than just a drag show. At the last show, in the Fernwood Community Association, we had a bunch of queer-friendly artists put their stuff up, and we had a little art show. We try to keep it diversified... kids are welcome, as well.
M: As a performance group, where would you like to take your show? Or in other words, when are you guys going to hit Vegas?
Holly: Whenever we're invited! This is kind of fitting, though – a couple of weeks ago, I ran into a girl in the bar who does performances in the local Vancouver scene. I told her I was part of a drag king group, and she asked if we had any interest in performing in Vancouver. She went back and told a friend who organizes performances that there was a group of drag kings in Victoria – willing to travel. I got a call from her, and she invited us to go over on the 12th of May to perform. Out of that, we're going to go to Vancouver. As a group, we're so strong, and I think it will be really good for us to go and get the word out.
M: What's your dream audience? Is there any group or person who you would want to show up and watch the performance?
Kaila: Madonna! No, the best audience would still be our friends.
Jolene: They're the people who respond well to it, enjoy it, and clap through the songs.
M: So what would be the differences (if any) between drag kings, or women who dress and act as men, and drag queens, or men who dress and act as women?
Wyndi: Lots... first of all, recognition. People know who drag queens are. You don't have to explain it to them, whereas with drag kings, some people have never heard the term.
Kaila: I think drag queens get criticized a lot more for the unrealistic idea of the glamour and glitz, compared to who they are, whereas drag kings don't get that kind of flak.
Holly: There's also a sort of drag queen subculture – there are a lot of stereotypes associated with them. Like a bitchy, working-class cat-goddess kind of thing. I don't know if there could be an established stereotype with drag kings, because they're not out there yet. With drag queens, their style of acting is very vaudeville and staged. Ours can be that way, too, but it has a lot more to do with comedy, and satirical mocking.
Wyndi: If it wasn't for all the guys who have been doing drag shows for a long time, there probably wouldn't be the audience, the acceptance and the base. They did a lot of groundbreaking. We need to give due where due is owed, and they did a lot to make this possible.
M: If you guys could choose any decade to live in, which would you choose?
Wyndi: Now. We have so many freedoms, and everyone's worked so hard to get us here. I can be queer in my job-space, and I can dress up like a guy with a bunch of my friends and put on a show. I can go home and be me.
Kaila: I can be a daycare worker by day and a drag king by night, and nobody cares.
Holly: I can send my mother pictures of the show, and have her like them.



photos provided

Streetside art goes inside at the Maltwood Gallery

by Miranda Post

A pink, blue and green lizard stalks his prey. A huge, acidic black and white butterfly stares at a Hobbit-like landscape. A perfectly breasted, headless women lazes next to a goofy, four- armed buddha/elephant. A peach, green, red, black and white yo'boy poses. Fire hydrants spew out tags towards monsanto-sized carrots.

These are just some of the street images that are on display in the Maltwood Gallery from May 5-18 in the third annual Urban Art Exhibition.

On May 5, 12 aerosol artists put paint to canvas for an afternoon to raise money for the Rock Solid Foundation of Greater Victoria and to promote awareness of an art form that Victorians seem to love or hate.

"It went over really well," said curator Graham Winterbottom. "Lots of the public came out, and 200 cans of spray paint were used as people walked around and checked it out."

Island's Blessed Children (IBC), a local group of graffiti painters with work at the Fernwood Community Centre, Wildfire Bakery and the first two Urban Art Exhibitions, provided the majority of the artwork for the show. With graffiti lovers looking on, the crew created seemingly three-dimensional landscapes, figures, and twisted calligraphy.

The graffiti art on display will be sold in a silent auction and includes works from local street-art veterans like Bear, Phrase, Dr. Derfer, Verse, Ghost and others. The proceeds from the auction will be split between the Rock Solid Foundation and the artists.

Rock Solid is a non-profit organization that was formed by Victoria police officers and members of the Shamrocks Lacrosse team to prevent youth crime and violence in 1997. Now, Rock Solid travels around to schools spreading its message to "challenge apathy and make a difference in their communities."

Winterbottom said that providing a healthy, clean, safe environment for young Victorian aerosol enthusiasts is where the Urban Art Exhibition ties in to the Rock Solid mission. For the past year Rock Solid has been working with BC Youth Options E-teams on the Westside Rail Project.

"They're creating a graffiti art corridor with lights and garbage cans. It's a legal space that is aesthetically pleasing for people," Winterbottom said.

The spray can painters aren't the only ones who will benefit from this project.

According to the Rock Solid website, while creating the "vibrant linear parkway" the E-teams picked up over 2000 kg of waste, built walking paths that provided a safer alternative to walking along the tracks, and installed garbage cans.

Tourists taking the Malahat train will also benefit from the long legal art wall. Imagine the delight when tourists, who've had royal old Victoria propaganda shoved down their throats for three days, get a crazy glimpse of spray spectrums.

"Wow, honey did ya see that? Reminded me of the paint-ins we all used to have in Soho 69. What a flashback!" Mrs. Anywhere, USA could exclaim.

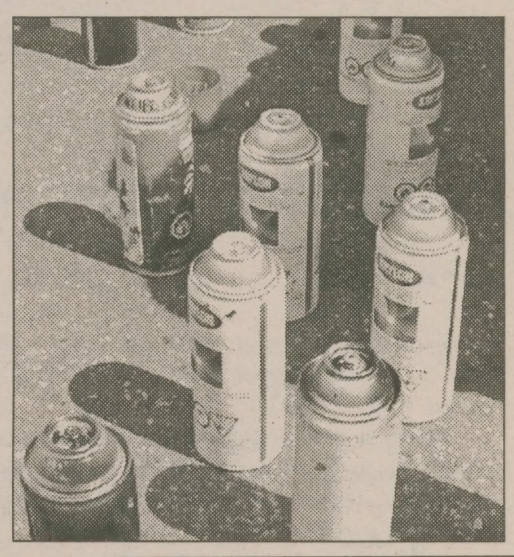
As the repetitive Kandinsky-like canvases scream out to otherwise staid Maltwood regulars, the gallery has also seen an influx of visitors who may have never been to the inconspicuous little art gallery in University Centre.

"It added a little bit of funk to the stale little museum," Winterbottom laughed.

For more info visit the Maltwood before May 18 or go to http://www.rocksolid.bc.ca or www.angelfire.com/bc/vicgraff/.

photo by Graham Winterbottom

Graffiti artists put on a show to raise money and awareness.



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Of wafflers and forgetters

by Sarah Pollard

photo provided

While anthropologists and conventional therapists have abandoned notions of a universal childhood, for many of us reared in the 70s, Neil Diamond was as good as universal. "Coming to America" could have been our anthem as we strode to school, lunchboxes in hand. No one cared that it wasn't patriotic listening to that song on your parents hi-fi, punching the air with your fist, was one of the few things that could actually make you pine to be an American.

Nearly Neil's St. Patrick's day extravaganza at the Icehouse Bar was so impressive that when Bobby announced his next visit to Victoria's Ingraham Hotel, my campaign to recruit an appreciative, energetic group of friends to commemorate his visit began. Since then, at dinner parties, at work, at happy hour the talk has been not 'Nearly' Neil, but purely Neil, only Neil.

We are decked out in shiny pantsuits and white plastic shoes, purchased from the 'flammable' section at Value Village or Sally Ann.

Promises were made but, as so often happens, calls from the wafflers began to pile up on my answering machine in the days leading up to the show, a series of regrets from friends, incredible excuses which, taken together established a kind of apathetic pageantry, a stitched together found art.

My friend Grant, a lawyer who comes over faithfully Thursday nights so he can beam in *Survivor* through the bunny ears atop our tv, leaves a long-winded message about how Neil has in some way offended him, or irritated him, is associated with a painful event in his past, how his wife likes Neil but hates Rod Stewart and so will probably hate Fraud Stewart who is performing with Nearly Neil.

Another girlfriend balks at our idea to dress up in 70s gear: "I'm out. It's the dress-up thing. I'm just not sure about the dress-up thing," she tells the machine.

There are blurbs about the expense ($20), though some of these friends are co-workers who forget I know how much money they make, know they'll spend more than the cost of a ticket on coffee or greasy nachos on a lunch break. I consider that if they are conflicted weighing the scales, Neil on one side, a plate of taco chips on the other, they have no business coming anyway.

Lindsay is one of my 'yes' friends. You can give her a handful of details about a happening and she is already nodding her assent. I tell her only that we saw Nearly Neil's last show, that it was not a show but a spectacular – the bit about Bobby's lyric changes, that he sings not just "Coming to America" but "Coming to Victoria." She looks amazed. She passes me the money to buy her a ticket. I am walking away when she calls my name.

"Hey. Do you mean Neil Diamond or Neil Young?"

There are so few Lindsays around. We forget to take chances every now and again, to let ourselves go and it's easy to get into the habit of saying 'no'; these are the parameters of safety. Lindsay is proud that the words she will belt out will not be Neil's but for lack of exposure, her very own.

She is committed to them. She is decisive. She is not a waffler.

We are decked out in shiny pantsuits and white plastic shoes, purchased from the 'flammable' section at Value Village or Sally Ann. The Ingy setting is perfect. The terry-towel tabletops are still there. It's comforting to know that some things don't change, reassuring that for all of our futurist obsessions, it's possible to find our way back to the past. It's a beautiful thing to vault yourself into a sea of faces obscured by swirling cigarette smoke and the shadows cast from baseball caps – you could swear you'd walked into a trucker's convention. There are plenty of glances our way but no one cares whether this is our daily wear or attire adopted for the evening. Here, everyone is welcome; there are parents and grandparents and sons and daughters; there is leopard print, Birkenstocks. There is more than one mullet.

Just before Neil takes the stage, an obvious electricity hangs in the air. My boyfriend leans over and says, "Bobby's over there."

For a moment I think he has met one of the truckers sitting nearby.

Unbelievably I ask, Who's Bobby? He gives me a look and points over to the corner. In the dark my eyes just distinguish the feathered hair, a sequined shirt. In the flesh. I am out of my seat faster than a marathoner bursting out of a Port-a-Potty at the starter's pistol. I try to act cool, 'Hey Bobby, I'm Sarah, did you get my e-mail?' (He did) I'm exhilarated and he hasn't even hit the stage. There in front of me Bobby is all of 5 ft 6, his pants a little long, coming down a little too far over his cowboy boots- I picture his mom leaning over her sewing machine. He is shy, sweet, humble. He has never met Neil Diamond, yet he takes the stage each night with ferocious energy, that famous hitch in his voice and pays the ultimate compliment to his mentor.

When he does, the 'yes' posse is already positioned at the helm of the crowd, can make out the play list at Bobby's, I mean Neil's, feet.

Spectacular.

Women's examples inspire others

by Brenda Martin

Inspiration always leaves an impression. This was the catch-phrase of the 2001 Women of Distinction Awards, and these women were certainly inspired.

"Women do phenomenal things that they just don't talk about," said Judy Forbister, this year's winner of the Community Leadership category. "We do them because we see a need. We do them as a part of us."

Any woman can be nominated for a Women of Distinction Award. One person must make the official nomination and several other supporters must write letters of declaration and support. It is a long process but 77 women were nominated this year, the seventh annual ceremony, in 12 separate categories.

From changing government policy and supporting diversity to making scientific breakthroughs, these women are inspired from the inside. However, many were quick to mention mentors who have helped bring them to where they are today.

Judy Forbister looked to her mother who was a single parent of a mixed-race family in the 1950s. "I have always been inspired by her strength and tenacity," Forbister said. However, she found strength from another mentor as well. Forbister works within the Social Services Ministry influencing policy and programming. Her mentor, Dr. Margaret Fulton, worked to change the hierarchy of Mount St. Vincent University to be a much more inclusive, circle-based system.

Eleanor White, whose category, Science, Technology and Environment, was sponsored by UVic, won for her DNA work for the Canadian Forest Service. White discovered DNA markers in trees that could prove if wood came from a certain stump. Before this process was developed, people had to be caught in the act of illegal foresting for a charge to be brought against them, said White.

White doesn't have a specific mentor as some do. She credits her father for influencing her to go into science; however, it was a colleague who inspired her forest DNA idea. He telephoned her "spitting mad" about an illegal cut he could not prove. "The O.J. Simpson trial was on at the time and my friend said that we needed DNA evidence like they were using with O.J," said White. "Well, after I stopped laughing I thought 'Hey, that might be possible.'"

Suki Dhesi, winner of the Leadership in the Workplace award, worked with colleague Kevin Worth and spent many volunteer hours creating a diversity unit in the Victoria police force. The unit, created in 1996, works to spread understanding and diversity throughout Victoria.

Dhesi too has her mentors. When she first came to Victoria she met Joanne Beamish, one of the first female police officers in Victoria during the 1970s. In the 1970s, said Dhesi, female police officers were not allowed to carry guns, were not allowed to parole the streets, and had to wear skirts. Much has changed since Beamish was first hired and this inspired Dhesi to continue to push for change. With the diversity unit up and running, she is now working on a new project focussing on workplace harassment.

"When you hear everything that people are doing, all the different people and different things, I was really blown away," said White. This was a common sentiment of the winners. Sheena Manning, winner of the Young Women of Distinction award, stated in her acceptance speech, "tonight, reading about the other women... wow, you humble me."

The Women of Distinction award event also served to celebrate the 125 anniversary of the YW-YMCA existing in Victoria. Proceeds from the dinner went to support YW-YMCA programs such as Camp Thunderbird, Youth Leadership Development Program, Youth Outreach, Child Care and Sport and Recreational Programs.

Radio killed the video star

by Miranda Post

For those of us who resist the temptations of television and all of its radio-star killing abilities, there are some wicked airwaves still floating out there. Whether you're flipping burgers or actually working in your field of study for the summer in the Garden City there are a few good listens for almost any shift. Here are a few that I've discovered working in the plethora of minimum wage industries where playing your own music from home isn't an option.

101.9 CFUV
CFUV is a model of public broadcasting. This student-run, community oriented radio station plays everything from hard-hitting electronica, to country punk twang, to Bhangra or social issues talk shows. Some of my personal favourite shows are *Boom Shak Attack* Saturdays from 9-10 p.m., *Straight, No Chaser* Wednesdays 6-8pm or *Tribalife* Tuesdays 12:30AM-till late. Requests are gladly taken no matter what time you call and they usually can find what you are looking for, or an equivalent.
The grade: A-

98.9 Smooth Jazz
Though I am a big Canadian Broadcasting fan, and love to wave my dirty-backpack-patch-flag around, this Seattle station rocks. A friend introduced me to it while I was going through hardcore midterm hell and it smoothed my frazzled nerves in 10 seconds. No joke. The mornings are a little dodgier and elevatoresque than the afternoon programs. Every time I dial in to this station that little Billie Holliday/John Coltrane part of me starts tapping. Expect to hear everything from Sade to Charlie Parker to St. Germain on this station.
The grade: B+

90.5 CBC
Victoria's own branch of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation could trumpet the logo: By Canadians for Canadians. Nuf said?
The grade: A-

95.7 The Beat
The station's logo tag says it all: "Disco, Funk and old school Jams." This station will help your shift fly by because you will know the words to every song. No shit. In the average "Beat" half-hour I've relived my grade 5 dance, first kiss and the first time skipping Math 11. MC Hammer, the Bee Gees and Boney M all grace the hitlist at this Seattle station. The major drawback: you suddenly realize you know the words to every ditty from the days of velour, polyester and teased bangs. Good way to show that you've been breakin' it down to the cheese for quite some time.
The grade: A

100.3 the Q
This station is for the yippie set, or Joe, my next-door neighbour who doesn't receive a clear cable version of the Fox from Vancouver. The Q is good to listen to while painting and or driving through Chilliwack. There are a lot of cool giveaways (especially when it comes to gigs by local pop icons. David Gogo, anyone?). Plus, I have to admit seeing those bus size pictures of Ed Bain making an ass of himself gives a very personal, friendly aspect to Victoria's most obnoxiously fromage station.
The grade: C+

Hot 103.1
Three words can sum up this station: Weekends at Legends. Good for those drinking-game parties or ragers where the cd selection is limited or the host too lazy to hire turntablists. Expect a lot of Shaggy, Jennifer Lopez, Backstreet Boys and Destiny's Child. Predictability is another reason to listen to this station. Whether you tune in 10 a.m. or 10 p.m. the playlist repeats itself (different host, verbatim song order).
The grade: C

Extreme107.3
A relatively new station in Victoria, it's more mod than The Q and serves as a reminder that grunge is not dead. During the day, Extreme is mainly good time rock and roll, but after hours on Fridays and Saturdays there are some great dancing and chilling beats. On Saturdays from 12:00-4:00 a.m. is *Really Good Music* with local djs Arizona and Emit. In the past month a hip hop show has been added to the Edge's menu as well. Produced by Atomique productions, *Clock Radio* late Friday nights showcases the talents of local hiphop gurus Degree One and D-Whiz. The Stir-Fry boys serve up some uber urban beats for those of us with past lives in Compton or Boston.
The grade: B+

96.1 Taxi Radio
One of the few stations that transmits across the Georgia Strait regularly into my car or living room, Taxi radio is super culturally diverse. There's a lot of Chinese and East Indian and African music and talk programs during the day. This station is great if you are craving a little more cultural diversity than what the mainstream Victoria radio tanks have to offer. As a nice chatty counterpart to the Saturday night show on the Edge, there is the *G-spot*, a show run by Lounge X, the same company that puts on *Summer Love* every year. Midnight Fridays until 4 a.m. is a good time to tune in to shake rump to international and Vancouver-based house, trance or hard house djs.
The grade: A-

Notes from Phonerworld

A moment's reflection on being a cog

by Kevin Groves

I'm a phoner.

If you're at home, I can call you. If you're at work, I can call you. If you're having a love affair with your cell phone, I can call you. If you're awake, I can call you. If you're asleep, I can call you. If you exist in North America, I can call you. If you're in the middle of the playoffs, that relaxing weekend, your best friend's wedding, or your loved one's funeral, I can call you, though I probably won't be answered. That's okay: I'll just leave a message and call someone else.

I can call you anywhere, anytime. I am that irritating mosquito flitting around your ear, asking you to recant your experience as a college graduate, an apprenticeship ticket holder, a business owner, or a foster parent. I will ask you how much money you make, how many children you have, who you work for, and why you are not in a job which is more related to that degree you graduated with. You might ask me what the relevancy of my question is, but I won't listen to you since my survey doesn't have room for those comments.

I stare at my screen and try to focus. The words "love your job, and never aspire" flit across like a mantra, and I stare up at the fluorescent lights and wish that they weren't so bright.

Looking back over what I've just written, I wonder if you might get the impression that my job has some power, importance,or societal benefit attached to it. Let me assure you that it takes about a week of phonerworld to shake off this naive view. I am a parasite, plain and simple.

For the last eight months I've been doing survey work for a statistical research company to support my depraved habits (like 2 a.m. cravings for peanut butter M&M's). I shouldn't complain, really: the pay is excellent for a low-end student job, and my co-workers and bosses are good people. I should be grateful, right? So what if virtually everyone I talk to on the phone would rather see my head on a stick sharpened at both ends than do a survey with me, that's just the job, and who am I to think that I have an opinion?

I may be a phoner, but I am still a human being.

When I step off the elevator onto the office floor, I walk into Douglas Coupland's worst nightmare: the limp pastel wall paint, the lack of personalization, and of course the row upon row of Ikea furnished cubicles.

It is the unbending *sameness* of the place that sets me on edge, and drives home that I am a low-level, replaceable cog in a data entry machine. My world for the next eight hours is a five-foot square cubicle, a system phone, a slow computer, and a headset that digs into my ear.

I stare at my screen and try to focus. The words "love your job, and never aspire" flit across like a mantra, and I stare up at the fluorescent lights and wish that they weren't so bright. I'm told that all offices have similar lighting since brighter lights have been linked to higher productivity, and after seven months of working here I've found that those studies are right. Only problem is that we start to burn out after the seventh hour like plants that have been scorched by the sun.

Co-workers begin filing into their cubicles as I boot up. When you're a phoner, all traces of individuality are stripped away except your initials, which are used to tell other phoners who has called a respondent before. No longer am I Kevin Groves, I am now just KG, and every time I type it into the computer I can almost hear the voice of conformity in the background:

You are not special. You are not a delicate or unique snowflake.

I don the headset, type in my password, and the games begin. BN looks over at me and gives me the thumbs up: he's managed to get a respondent right off the bat. It turns out to be a quick one, and he rockets through the survey in a jabber of phonerspeak that's like listening to a movie on fast forward. With my luck I'll probably get a talker.

There are three types of respondents when you're a phoner: the reluctant respondent, the talker and the refusal. The refusal is self-explanatory, they'll just tell you where to go, but reluctants are different. They're people who would rather have their spine pulled out one vertebrae at a time than talk to you, but are too polite to tell you where to go.

Every so often you'll talk to someone who is generally interested in the survey, but I wouldn't hold my breath waiting for them: they're about as rare as middle-aged movie stars who haven't had plastic surgery.

My theory is reconfirmed every time I work. I say hi to a reluctant and they're polite, happy and say hi back. Then you drop the S-bomb and BOOM, instant change. It's like a switch in the respondent's brain suddenly clicked, and the other personality (the one that prefers the spinal treatment) makes its appearance. The ones with guts will just refuse, but the ones that feel obligated will go through it with you.

I almost prefer refusals, because you can hang up and say YAY REFUSAL with feeling (people always stare at me at work when I do this). With reluctants you just feel worse and worse as the survey goes on, since neither one of you wants to be there. Sometimes you'll get really weird people. DO told me awhile back that she called a respondent who claimed that she could talk to spirits. I assume that they must have gotten the better of this woman because the phone went dead halfway through the interview. She didn't really know how to code that one.

Other times you'll get people who are about as attentive as a fence post, and will make you repeat yourself. It's always depressing when this sad display happens: the poor phoner, who now probably has the vocal chords of an 80-year-old, being forced to ask the same question over and over again. It's similar to watching a horse with a broken leg try to run: you should just put them out of their misery.

Talkers, though, are the worst. Picture that annoying acquaintance who would run on at the mouth forever (you have to wonder how such people breathe). When phoners do a survey they estimate a time that it will take to do it, but talkers force the unlucky phoner to stay on the line much longer than necessary, telling you their life story about God knows what, whether it's related to your question or not. Then, (the kicker) they act surprised that the survey is taking longer than you said it would, as if it's your fault they haven't learned to give someone else the conch once in awhile. It's enough to make you pop a major blood vessel in frustration.

One time I listened to someone rant for 10 minutes. She went on and on, and though what she had to say was valid, it had absolutely nothing to do with any of the questions I have to ask. So while she's trying to bridge the gap from the headset into my brain, I'm staring up at the ceiling wondering just how many pencils I can stick up there in one go. Blah blah blah...

And therein lies my worst problem with talkers since they often have meaningful things to say, but I have no space to put in their comments because the way the survey's constructed doesn't give room. After awhile the talker will begin to see the way the wind's blowing and they become very aggravated. Suddenly, you're the unknowing peon at the very lowest rung on the governmental food chain (somewhere in the single-celled category) that has to explain to this worn out and pissed off person about how the questions you're asking are relevant to their problems. Most times, though, you'll just get an earful and then the big click. YAY REFUSAL!

I shouldn't complain: that's just part of the job.

Through years of survey drudgery, phoners have created their own code language. Instead of saying "I left a message with the person who answered the phone," I can simply put "lmwpwap" and all is understood.

Sometimes phoners will vent their frustrations using elegant strings of code: "respabofad, cbltrwingm." Translation: "respondent is a bit of a dink, call back later when he's in a good mood."

We can't say this stuff to the respondent, of course, since that would be unprofessional. If you're in the mood to vent your frustration, a phoner can simply hit the headset's mute button and cut loose, since no one can hear you. Veteran phoners can keep up a conversation about the fun they had last night and do a survey all at the same time with the help of the mute button. Multitasking is a beautiful thing.

If only the respondent could see what we're REALLY doing when we're talking to them. I cannot count the number of times I have pretended to hang myself with my phone cord while saying: "uh huh, mmmm, yes, anything else you'd like to say about how your college can be improved?"

It could always be worse, I guess. If I were a girl I'd have to deal with being hit on by the respondent. This happens more times than you might think. Of course, there are those respondents who think I'm a girl when I call them. This too happens more times than you might think, and there is nothing I can do about it. What would I say?

Hours tick by slowly as the survey completions pile up, and my fingers start to get sore from mashing the speed dial button. It's eerie when multiple phoners are doing surveys at the same time, you could be at the same point in a survey with your neighbour and not even know it. If you listen closely, the voices will begin to blur together into a single symphony of phonerspeak:

We are the phoners. Lower your defenses and surrender your data. We will add your individual and relevant distinctiveness to our own. Your life experience will become one with us. Resistance is futile.

I look over and watch KH walk into the office to talk about her completion rate. I shake my head and remember that I have to be on my guard when the inner office door is closed. See, every headset in the office is linked to the inner office network, which allows the supervisors to listen into your interviews at any time. This means that you have to be constantly on your guard when you lift that receiver lest Big Brother is listening.

Monitoring is just part of the job, to make sure we're efficient. There's nothing really wrong with it, right?

I check my watch and crack my first smile all day: five hours in, break time. I stand up, joints creaking, and head over to the front desk to sign out. Now begins my routine pilgrimage to the local convenience store, or our unofficial cafeteria, to pick up my lunch. I walk into the staff room, package tucked under one arm, and sit down to eat in absolute silence.

That's one thing that I've learned about being a phoner: you really come to appreciate the value of quiet after you've talked for a few hours. I wolf down my stir-fry and stare at the futuristic black coffee machine at the other end of the room (dubbed the replicator) since there's nothing else to look at. With my neurons firing at half speed, the minutes blur into unintelligibility, like the jumble of gobbledygook you'll see if you ever try to read something when you're dreaming.

Did you know: if your appliance is appealing to the futuristic image, it will always be black; your Trinitron tv, or state of the art stereo equipment are good examples.

I look at the clock and curse: five minutes late. No doubt the office manager will be on my case for taking a "half hour" break again. I toss my Styrofoam container into the cupboard to keep from putting it in the garbage and head back to my desk. The harsh glare of the screen makes my contact lenses water as I try to return to some semblance of productivity, and I lift the phone receiver for my last few hours at work.

As the seventh hour comes and goes I enter into my own little world where all that exists is the computer and the phone. I make the final transition to survey drone in a hive of statistical information: a mindless automaton who picks up the receiver, dials, spews the survey, gets the completions, hangs up and repeats.

A random thought flits through my brain during this time. TL once asked me what my comfort food was as a starving student, and I replied that it was tuna since it is all I seem to be eating lately. I read somewhere that if you eat lots of tuna it can actually boost your brainpower. If this rumour is true then I'm probably committing an act of heinous intellectual waste by being here, since my brain activity is probably on par right now with a glass of water.

But who cares, I'm making money; after all, I am not being paid to think. In fact, as I reflect on my employment history, I don't think I ever have been.

I log in my hours at the end of the day and join the line of phoners waiting for the signature that gives this whole escapade meaning. We file past and pick up our pay cheques, and as I open mine up I hope that this is the week when I will finally get that bonus I've been waiting almost two months for. When I look inside it turns out that I do get the bonus, but since I made over five hundred dollars it pushes me into a higher tax bracket and the government grabs it all back.

I want to yell in frustration, but my lungs won't cooperate; they're burnt out from a solid eight-hour workout that would leave an Olympic runner gasping for breath. I try to think about the bright side, and tell myself that I should be thankful I have a job. It could be worse: I could be back in a fast food restaurant, one of the living dead that'll serve you up a meal which will slowly turn your arteries into a sewage outlet pipe. Would you like nitroglycerine with that?

But something inside me snaps anyway. I hate being a phoner. My thoughts turn to the impending Liberal victory here in B.C. that I will have no say in (kind of like the federal election), and their undoubted policy of providing tax breaks to the wealthy that will increase my debt load and make tuition higher, forcing me to work as a phoner more just to make ends meet.

Most of all, I hate the fear that I fight to control as my mid-20s make themselves known in my bathroom mirror. Will I be forced to work at a job that I hate for the rest of my life?

That is why I complain.

I'm not being paid to think. In fact, as I reflect on my employment history, I don't think I ever have been.

Better living through geometry

by Kevin Groves

"Stupid ball, why can't you just go home!"

My brother Richard looks over at me and grins: "Hey man, only a poor carpenter blames his tools."

I scowl, look down at my cue stick, and wonder what it would look like wrapped around Richard's neck as he promptly clears the table for the third time in a row. The balls go zooming into the pockets like heat-seeking missiles finding their targets. As I watch my younger sibling in action, I must admit that I'm impressed: he's improved a lot since the last time I was up here.

While my Greyhound bus was making its final trip into Kelowna, the city of my formative years, I looked around and was reminded that little changes in this dismal stretch of civilization. Row upon row of strip malls and chain restaurants greeted my eye as I headed to the depot. I noticed that only B.C. Liberal signs seemed to be adorning the streets, a not so subtle reminder that the words "back in the good old days" will soon be crossing my lips.

If you've ever watched *That 70s Show* you might remember Hyde saying one episode that you don't have to die to go to a better place, just drive fifty miles in any direction. The sight of Kelowna inspires such witty remarks.

However, some things still remain that break up the monotony, like enjoying the velvet touch of the pool table with my young sibling.

My mother purchased the table last year when my other brother Michael left for UBC to show everyone within bragging distance how large his cranium is (the showoff is double majoring in Math/Physics). Since Richard was now by himself, Mom decided to find something for him to do to keep him from going crazy.

The last time I was up here, sometime in October, the three of us all took a crack at the table. By the time we left to return to our separate worlds, we were all ready to hustle some serious coin at the nearest pool hall.

For me, though, that was it for the game. I hung up my chalk the minute I returned to Victoria and contented myself to pursuits that don't involve dropping a few grand for a decent table, or nightly trips to a hall to be intimidated by the big egos of sleazy professionals.

Richard, though, seems to have kept at it, and when I see him unzip a black leather case and break out his custom-made stick, I begin to realize that I may be in a bit of trouble. We chalk up our sticks like soldiers sharpening their weapons, and head over to the table to do battle.

Richard graciously lets me break, and I sink two solid balls right off the bat. I line up for my next shot, which turns out to be a long one (known to be my weak point). As usual I give it too much angle and the ball careens off in the wrong direction. I head over to the large cardboard box in the far corner and wait for Richard to make a mistake.

Unfortunately, though, the mistake is not forthcoming, and I try to keep calm while Richard begins a streak across the table like an avenging angel, smugly uttering "beep beep" like an ultra cocky Road Runner as I move out of his way for shot after shot.

My mother comes into the room and tells me that I have a tough comeback on my hands if I still want to pull this game off. It's nice to have a cheerleader.

I line up my cue, sweat collecting on my forehead, and take my time with my shots. Every time I hear the plunk of a sunken ball my heart starts beating again. I grin ever so slightly when I notice the grimace cross my brother's face as he begins to realize that he might lose after all.

Then disaster hits: I have to make a corner shot and my cue is too long. See, when my mother purchased this table, she neglected to think about the dimensions of her basement. So whenever someone has to make a shot in the corner, they are handicapped by the limited amount of power available on the shot.

As I take the shot, I realize that it's not hard enough to reach the pocket, or even to make it across the table and I curse in frustration. Worst of all, I've left Richard with a clear shot at the eight ball and when he impudently nails it into the side pocket; I realize that I've just been outclassed.

It's always upsetting when you wake up one day and realize that your younger siblings have grown up to be bigger than you, and can now challenge you with an authority that you must carefully consider. I think back to the times when I used to be able to pick Richard up with one hand and handcuff him to my mother's car (so he wouldn't change the channel on the tv), and wonder if he remembers too. It was all in good fun bro, really it was.

But as I watch Richard do his little victory dance in front of the table, I can at least get the small satisfaction of knowing that he'll get his comeuppance from my Dad. See, my father practices his game almost every night and has become something of a magician these days. He will wait for you to make that one mistake, and then, smelling blood, will quickly sink every ball.

When I last spoke to my Dad, he told me about the last time Richard went over to his house to play pool. He came in with his custom-made cue, and blew off enough hot air to keep the Goodyear blimp afloat until the next millennium. They played ten games, two of which Dad was restricted to a one ball per turn maximum, and he still won them all.

Dad told me that on the drive back to my mother's house Richard was quite a bit more silent than the trip over. I laughed out loud and wished that I could have been there to see it. Oh how the mighty have fallen.

This thought makes me feel a little better as we rack up the balls for a new game which looks like it will unfold similarly to the one we just played. I don't really care that the best I can do on the pool table is improve my play to be, at the very least, respectable. I'm just grateful that I can spend a few pleasant hours doing something with my family, who I don't see much of anymore.

However, seeing that look of worry come across Richard's face again as I aim for the break will make it all really worthwhile.

Vikes rowers compete in Seattle

by Kevin Groves

On Sat. May 5, the UVic Vikes men's and women's rowing teams wrapped up their season by competing in the Windermere Cup Rowing Regatta on Montlake Cut in Seattle, Washington. The last time UVic attended the invitation-only event was in 1982.

Team Croatia, who won the bronze medal in the 2000 Olympics, walked away from the event with a time of 5:31:75. The Vikes men came in a close second with 5:36:37, defeating the University of Washington with a time of 5:40:21. This race marked the first time the Vikes have beaten the University of Washington in 2000m competition.

"The guys put out a great race," said Howard Campbell, Men's Coach for the Vikes rowers. "The last time we were here we were beaten by the U of W crew, and it was good to see our crew handle the day well."

Campbell also said that some Croatians expressed surprise at the speed of the North American crews.

"They certainly weren't expecting us to be so fast," he said.

After a rough start in choppy water, the Vikes women came in third at 6:23:00, behind the Romanian crew at 6:22:45, and the first place University of Washington who crossed the line at 6:17:12. Campbell said that a rough start did much to ensure the outcome for the Vikes women.

"The women were a bit disappointed with their race, and they were hoping to be a bit closer," he said. "That rough start threw them off pace a bit, and they had a hard time regaining their pace."

In the Windermere Cascade Cup, the second Varsity boats competed for the Vikes. The men's crew placed third out of five and the women placed fourth out of five.

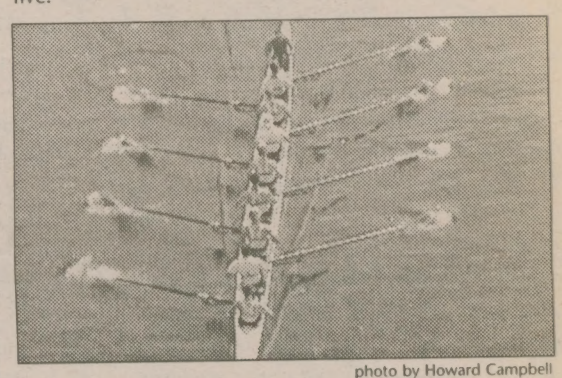

photo by Howard Campbell

Vikes rowers compete at the Windermere Regatta.

BILLBOARDS

ON CAMPUS

The third annual Urban Art Exhibition is being held at the Maltwood Gallery until Friday, May 18. For those of you interested in fly fishing, check out the upcoming exhibit: Roderick Haig-Brown: A Legacy. The Maltwood is open Mon. - Fri. from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

OFF CAMPUS

The Moss Street Market is gearing up for another season of organic produce and herbs, organic baked goods, crafts and a variety of interesting creations. Drop by Saturdays from 10am to 4pm and see what the market has to offer this year. The market is located at Sir James Douglas School, Thurlow + Fairfield.

VOLUNTEERS

People needed to help set up an independent media presence in Victoria. Call Krisztina at 721-8629 for details.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ride wanted: UVic to Duncan. One-way only, Tues. and Thurs. evenings in May and June. Depart UVic 9:30 p.m. Will pay **$$$**. Phone 748-5761.

LOST & FOUND

Fiendish procrastinator! You've got my sketchbook still and I need it back desperately. Call 385-7374.

WANTED TO BUY

Computer - at least 350 MHZ.
Phone Diane at 598-1303.

HELP WANTED

Help keep B.C. wild! Paid door to door canvassing positions available for Victoria area. Western Canada Wilderness Committee Call 388-9292.

The Tsay Keh Dene Band will be hiring a new teaching staff for 2001/2002 school term. The positions are for combined grades. Primary grades 1,2 and 3, Intermediate grades 4, 5 and 6 and senior grades 7, 8 and 9. The senior teacher will also be required to perform Principal duties. The positions will appeal to those who enjoy a challenge, are adventurous, enthusiastic, team players. Committed to individualized education and are interested in working with Native students. The applicant should be flexible and creative in planning, have a wide range of abilities and interests, be goal-oriented and must be B.C. certified.

Tsay Keh Dene village is located at the Northern tip of the Williston Lake in British Columbia's beautiful Rocky Mountains. Not only is it scenic, but it also offers great fishing and hiking. The community is accessible by logging road and by air, so it is somewhat isolated. The band offers competitive pay, possible shared accommodation, a great school, new gymnasium and classroom assistants.

Position is open to all applicants, including NEWLY GRADUATED STUDENTS. If you feel you are interested in this position and feel you are able to live in semi-isolation, please fax a full résumé including references and covering letter describing your personal education philosophy:

Education Coordinator
Tsay Keh Dene
Fax: 250-562-8899
No telephone calls please.
Closing date is June 8, 2001.

LETTERS

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Teddy bears and daisies threaten

I have watched events unfold around the FTAA in Quebec City with a mixture of horror and incredulity at the excesses of the state forces, the stifling of democracy and dissent, the mass arrests and outright assaults on peaceful protesters, and the blatant demonization of political activists unwilling to put profits before principles in their home communities and the world community.

The Canadian State, in a flight of paranoia of Orwellian proportions, today suggested that peaceful democracy activist Jaggi Singh is a risk to national security because he wanted to catapult teddy bears behind police lines.

Will I now be charged with assault for offering a high-cholesterol, artery clogging doughnut to a Vancouver police officer? Will Jenny Kwan, B.C. MLA, get done for floral assault for painting a daisy on a building?

We political activists are a dangerous breed indeed! Perhaps the government of Canada should pass a law forbidding freedom of expression, if for no other reason than to justify their actions against those who would dare express their disapproval against the actions of the state.

Roslyn Cassells

The death of democracy

Access to political news in British Columbia is impossible for the majority of its citizens due to the corporate consolidation and control of what was at one time our various news organizations. A corporate consolidation dedicated to electing a Liberal government in Victoria with Gordon Campbell as premier. The leaders debate on April 30 forced Campbell to step out from behind the veil of secrecy and reveal how a Liberal government plans to mismanage financial affairs for the citizens of this province. His revelation of plans to bring home a huge deficit this year – 400 to 500 million dollars followed by two more years of deficit financing is stunning news indeed. Not one word about this shocking news was presented Tuesday in either the *Vancouver Province* or the *Vancouver Sun* nor was it mentioned on Tuesday's BCTV news broadcasts. Suppressing news through selectively omitting vital information given by a political leader in order to serve the interests of a selected party at the polls is an exercise in sophisticated censorship. Censorship, the death of democracy.

Tim Pollock

Community members fight closure

As I write this letter, seven citizens of the Cowichan Valley have now been arrested for listening to their conscience and taking action to halt the dismantling of the Youbou Lumbermill by the TimberWest Forest Corporation.

Appeals to TimberWest Chief Executive Officer Paul McElligott by the Cowichan Lake Community Forest Co-operative Board, the Cowichan Valley Regional District Board, Cowichan mayors, our Cowichan MLA, the B.C. Minister of Forests, the Premier of B.C., all political candidates in the Cowichan constituency, newspaper editorials, some TimberWest investors, union leaders, environmental groups, and, oh yes, did I mention the workers?... All these pleas have fallen on the deaf ears of an uncaring corporation. Despite TimberWest intransigence, the non-profit volunteer Youbou TimberLess Society believes that social justice will prevail.

For the benefit of those arrested, the Youbou TimberLess Society has established a Youbou Legal Defence Account at the Island Savings Credit Union in Duncan. Citizens are invited to donate funds directly into this account or by personal cheques payable to the Youbou TimberLess Society (Legal Fund).

Roger Wiles